



THE SOUTH ATLANTIC FISHERY MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

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Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel Agenda

Stacie Crowe, Chair | TBD, Vice Chair

Town and Country Inn and Suites, 2008 Savannah Hwy, Charleston, SC 29407

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5210787270157983318>

June 30 and July 1, 2026

Other than the starting and ending times of the meeting, times indicated on the agenda are approximate, and the order of business may be adjusted as necessary to accommodate the completion of agenda items. Interested parties should be aware that discussions may start earlier or later than indicated.

Public comment will be solicited at the beginning and at the end of the meeting. Those wishing to comment should indicate such in the manner requested by the Chair, who will recognize individuals to provide comment in-person or on the webinar.

Tuesday, June 30, 2026, from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

- Welcome and Introductions
 - Approval of Agenda
 - Approval of Minutes ([January 2026](#))
 - Public Comment
 - Habitat and Ecosystem Committee Vice Chair Remarks – Tom Roller
1. Integration of Fishery Ecosystem Plan II information into the Food Webs and Connectivity Policy – Kathleen Howington, SAFMC (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)

2. Revision of the Alterations to Riverine, Estuarine, and Nearshore Flows policy to Address Impacts from Freshwater Discharges and Impediments to River Flow – Kathleen Howington (*Attachments 2a and 2b*)
3. Life Stage Information Updates for EFH Definitions – Kathleen Howington, Mathew Kenworthy, NC Division of Coastal Management (NCDCM), and Cameron Luck, NCDCM (*Attachment 3*)

Break

4. Space Industry Activity Impacts on Habitat – Kathleen Howington (*Attachment 4*)
5. Resilient Fisheries Initiative Updates and Ecosystem Information Review Updates – Lara Klibansky and Sarah Gaichas, SAFMC Contractors (*Attachments 5a and 5b*)
6. Mid-Atlantic Inflation Reduction Act Projects – Kiley Dancy, Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council (MAFMC) (*Attachment 6*)

Wednesday, July 1, 2026, from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm

7. Review of the Integrated Ecosystem Assessments for the Gulf and Mid-Atlantic regions – Brendan Turley, NOAA and Kiley Dancy, MAFMC (*Attachments 7a and 7b*)
8. Review of Offshore Development off the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic coast – Christian Commander, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) (*Attachment 8*)

Break

9. Modeling the feasibility of marsh elevation enhancement in South Carolina: Site selection, economic analysis, and decision support – Lexi Watson, S.C. Sea Grant Consortium (*Attachment 9*)
10. SAFMC Habitat Communication Strategy – Kathleen Howington (*Attachments 10a and 10b*)
11. Review HEAP Workplan 2025-2028, Appointments, Future Meetings, and Elections – Kathleen Howington (*Attachments 11a and 11b*)
12. Other Business

Public Comment

Adjourn

Attachments:

Attachment 1a: Integration of Fishery Ecosystem Plan II information into the Food Webs and Connectivity Policy Information Presentation

Attachment 1b: Food Webs and Connectivity Policy

Attachment 2a: Alterations to the Riverine, Estuarine, and Nearshore Flows Policy to Address Impacts from Freshwater Discharges and Impediments to River Flow Presentation

Attachment 2b: Riverine, Estuarine, and Nearshore Flows Policy

Attachment 3: Life Stage Information Updates for EFH Definitions Presentation

Attachment 4: Space Industry Activity Impacts on Habitat Presentation

Attachment 5a: Resilient Fisheries Initiative Updates Presentation

Attachment 5b: Ecosystem Information Review and Strategy Development Presentation

Attachment 6: Mid-Atlantic Inflation Reduction Act Projects Overview Presentation

Attachment 7a: Review of the Integrated Ecosystem Assessment for the Gulf Presentation

Attachment 7b: Review of the Mid-Atlantic Council's Integrated Ecosystem Assessment Presentation

Attachment 8: Review of Offshore Development off the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic Coast Presentation

Attachment 9: Modeling the feasibility of marsh elevation enhancement in South Carolina: Site selection, economic analysis, and decision support Presentation

Attachment 10a: Habitat and Ecosystem Outreach and Communication Strategy Presentation

Attachment 10b: Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel Frequently Asked Questions Document

Attachment 11a: HEAP Workplan, Appointments, Future Meetings, and Elections Presentation

Attachment 11b: HEAP Workplan 2025-2028

Overview

Habitat and Ecosystem Advisory Panel

The Advisory Panel will approve the minutes from the [January 2026 HEAP meeting](#) and the agenda for the current meeting. Tom Roller, North Carolina, Vice Chair of the Habitat and Ecosystem Committee, will make opening remarks

1. Integration of Fishery Ecosystem Plan II Information into the Food Webs and Connectivity Policy Information (*Attachments 1a and 1b*)

Description: The working group assigned to the [Food Web and Connectivity Policy](#) has paused work on the prey information integration plan to address the food web information in the Fishery Ecosystem Plan II document that was approved by the Council in March 2018. The group has met twice since the January 2026 HEAP meeting to integrate FEP II information into the 2024 food web policy.

Additionally, in a previous meeting, the working group encountered an issue deciding how to separate prey data used in the Ecopath/Ecosim model. Lauren Gentry (FWRI staff) is working on the issue and will report back to staff once she finishes her analysis.

Work group volunteers: Wilson Laney, Kevin Spanik, Chip Collier, Laurent Cherubin, Erin Spencer, and Lauren Gentry

AP Action: Review and decide whether to approve the integrated food web policy for Council approval.

2. Revision to Alterations to Riverine, Estuarine, and Nearshore Flows Policy to Address Impacts from Freshwater Discharges and Impediments to River Flow (*Attachments 2a and 2b*)

Description: During the October 2024 HEAP meeting, the HEAP recommended that the [Alterations to Riverine, Estuarine, and Nearshore Flows Policy](#) (Flow Policy) be updated to address impacts from freshwater discharges and impediments to river flow. In December 2024, the Council approved moving forward with the update. Since then, the Flow Policy working group has met five times. The HEAP will review the proposed revisions.

Work group volunteers: Wilson Laney, Stacie Crowe, David Web, Anne Deaton, Cameron Luck, and Matthew Kenworthy

AP Action: Discuss and review final edits for the policy. Decide whether to approve the policy for Council review.

3. Life Stage Information Updates for EFH Definitions Review (*Attachment 3*)

Description: [Subpart J of 50 CFR part 600](#) of the Magnuson-Stevens Act identifies the requirements of what the EFH definitions should entail. One of those requirements is that Councils must “identify in FMPs EFH for each life stage of each managed species in the fishery management unit”. Three fishery Management Plans (FMPs) are going to be updated through a resilient fisheries project, as discussed under agenda item 5. The

Coral, Sargassum, Spiny Lobster, Golden Crab, and Shrimp FMPs still need an update to meet this requirement. During the July 2025 HEAP meeting, three volunteers were identified for these FMPs. Staff will provide recommendations for life history information on the Coral and Sargassum EFH definitions. Matthew Kenworthy will provide recommendations for the Shrimp EFH definition, and Cameron Luck will provide recommendations for the Spiny Lobster EFH definition. The AP suggested asking the Golden Crab AP to provide information for golden crab life history, but further conversations with Council staff determined that this would not be efficient. **AP Action:** Determine a volunteer to update the Golden Crab EFH habitat use language. Decide whether to recommend the proposed life stage information for the EFH definitions for Sargassum, Coral, Shrimp and Spiny Lobster.

4. Space Industry Activity Impacts on Habitat (*Attachment 4*)

Description: Council staff have been gathering information on the space industry's impacts on the habitat and fishery surrounding the Cape Canaveral area. Staff will review the information that has been gathered over the last 10 months. The HEAP will discuss next steps to handle the data that has been gathered.

AP Action: Make recommendations on the best course of action for the Council on how to compile information on space activity impacts on the surrounding habitat, volunteers for the working groups, and any other appropriate next steps.

5. Resilient Fisheries Initiative Updates and Ecosystem Information Review (*Attachments 5a and 5b*)

Description: In 2024, the Council received funding for projects promoting fisheries resilience to ecosystem changes. Lara Klibansky will give an update on the Resilient Fisheries projects and provide an update on the recently held Ecosystem Data Workshop. Sarah Gaichas is undertaking the SAFMC Ecosystem Information Review and Strategy Development Project, which will be completed later this year. She will be presenting her findings on aligning SAFMC policy objectives and existing indicators, and on the development of a prototype spatial bottom temperature indicator. The draft workshop documents are here:

- All Council Ecosystem Data Review (for background info only) ([html](#)) ([pdf](#))
- SAFMC Options (main document for review) ([html](#)) ([pdf](#)) ([google doc](#) for comments)

AP Action: Discuss the alignment of EFH policy objectives with existing indicators ([methods](#) and [results](#)) and prototype spatial bottom temperature indicators ([methods](#) and [results](#)). Provide feedback and recommendations on other portions of the report as appropriate.

6. Mid-Atlantic Inflation Reduction Act Projects (*Attachment 6*)

Description: Kiley Dancy, Mid-Atlantic Council staff, will give an update on their Inflation Reduction Act projects including their climate ready EFH updates, improving governance structures and processes, operationalizing ecosystem indicators, evaluating data needs to support climate-ready management, and evaluating distribution changes.

AP Action: Discuss upcoming projects that may impact South Atlantic Fisheries or current SAFMC EFH definitions. Provide recommendations to the Council on which projects may need to be addressed in future meetings.

7. Review of the Integrated Ecosystem Assessments (IEAs) for the Gulf and Mid-Atlantic Regions (*Attachments 7a and 7b*)

Description: Representatives from the Mid-Atlantic Council and the Southeast Fisheries Science Center will give a summary of their respective IEAs and related processes, goals and objectives, pros and cons, and lessons learned.

AP Action: Discuss the projects and make recommendations for potential goals and objectives for an IEA conducted in the South Atlantic.

8. Review of Offshore Development Off the South Atlantic and Mid-Atlantic Coast Presentation (*Attachment 8*)

Description: Christian Commander, BOEM Renewable Energy Program, will provide an overview of offshore development activities in the South and Mid-Atlantic regions, including but not limited to offshore wind energy and oil and gas development.

AP Action: Identify projects that could impact South Atlantic habitats and determine if they need to be brought to the Council's attention.

9. Modeling the feasibility of marsh elevation enhancement in South Carolina: Site selection, economic analysis, and decision support (*Attachment 9*)

Description: Lexi Watson, South Carolina Sea Grant, will review how locations are chosen for thin layer placement projects including how locations are modeled, the modeling tool, economic analysis and what mitigation efforts are made to ensure that the project doesn't negatively affect the surrounding habitat.

AP Action: Identify if any information provided needs to be integrated into a habitat policy and which policy would be appropriate.

10. Update on Habitat and Ecosystem Outreach and Communication Strategy (*Attachments 10a and 10b*)

Description: The HEAP is tasked with developing an outreach and communication plan for habitat information. Staff will review the approved FAQs and future communication plans.

AP Action: Provide feedback on the FAQs and suggest any future outreach plans.

11. Review of the HEAP Workplan 2025-2028, Appointments, Future Meetings, and Elections (*Attachments 11a and 11b*)

Description: The HEAP will discuss the short- and long-term goals for the HEAP. Staff will review the policies and possible updates. Staff will also review the upcoming open seats and appointment process. Finally, the HEAP will hold votes for Chair and Vice Chair.

AP Action: Approve the revised HEAP work plan for submission to the Council.
Approve the next meeting dates and methods. Elect the chair and vice chair.

12. Other Business

Public Comment

Adjourn